



COMMISSION ON AGING

COMMISSION ON AGING MEETING

Minutes

July 24, 2017

PRESIDING: Sharonlee Vogel, Chair

Members Attending

Reginald Avery
Angie Boyter
Peter Brunner
Barbara Catlin
Deborah Fleischmann
Susan Hailman
Jan Horan
Julia Mattis
Bob McLaughlin
Andrew Monjan
Eletta Morse
Sue Song
Michael Willis

Excused

Jennifer Asher

County Administration

Allan Kittleman, County Executive

Office on Aging and Independence

Courtney Barkley
Terri Hansen
Peggy Hoffman
Ofelia Ott
Kathleen Swanson

Department of Community Resources and Services

Jackie Scott

Howard County Police Department

Andre Lingham

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00pm.

Approve Agenda

Julia Mattis motioned to approve the agenda and Michael Willis seconded the motion. Motion was approved. *All in favor. Agenda accepted.*

Approve Minutes

Reg Avery motioned to approve the minutes, and Pete Brunner seconded the motion. Motion was approved. *All in favor. Minutes accepted.*

Conversation with the County Executive

County Website and Communications

The Commission provided feedback to County Executive Kittleman about the county's overall communication strategy and the website.

- The Commission felt the County relies too heavily on press releases and would benefit from using email blasts.
- The system that replaced NotifyMeHoward, called HeadsUpHoward, isn't well known.
- Angie Boyter shared frustrations with the state's MAP website. The search function doesn't work well. It lists names of out-of-county resources long before well-regarded resources within the county such as Neighbor Ride. In addition, in 2015 she reported to the state technical people an error when searching for Personal Services Providers that results in no hits even though there are numerous providers that qualify; this has never been corrected. She suggested advocacy to improve the site, given the significant multi-million-dollar funding that has been provided for it.
- Pete Brunner shared that communication with the Commission regarding the Office on Aging and Independence's budget was insufficient, not timely, and results in the Commission not being able to fulfill the responsibilities set for them in County Code. The COA would like earlier access to the budget to facilitate their contribution.
- Angie Boyter also shared concerns about wording on a County produced flier for the Dental Screening Fair.
- County Website
 - Commissioners shared that the search feature on the County's website doesn't work well and often does not return expected results, even when you know what you're looking for.
 - Overall, Commissioners felt the site design needs improvement as it's focused on the department structure and not how members of the public would logically search for information. Without knowledge or expertise, you cannot find the things you want or need on the site.
 - COA suggests adding links to the school system on the "I want to" and "Services" tab. While they aren't part of county government, the Commission felt like the referral links would be appropriate and helpful to community members.
 - The Commission stressed that those without significant computer skills or knowledge of County government structure would have very little success in using the website as it is currently designed. As Howard County is a very diverse community, more thought needs to be given as to how the general public would approach the site.
 - Pete Brunner shared a complaint about the tax credit page having out of date information, following the release of Mr. Kittleman's announcement about changes to the credit, even after the error was reported.
 - Sue Song suggested creating a single point of entry for phone callers as she had issues using 211, 311, the Korean Care Line, and MAP.

Collaborative Efforts

The Commission provided comment on the "siloed" nature of services available for older adults in the Howard County community. Currently, there are duplicate services offered by government and private sector; could these be streamlined to better serve older adults living independently in the community?

- Sue Song began the discussion by outlining a case she was familiar with: The individual had both an in-home assessment from the Health Department's Adult Evaluation and Review Service (AERS) as well as the Office on Aging and Independence, but did not qualify for additional services from either agency as she only had Medicare, not Medicaid.
 - Supportive services seem to exist only if people have both Medicare and Medicaid, and this group makes up less than 12% of the population.
 - Is there a way to create programs and support services for those with only Medicare that could be paid for via a sliding scale?
 - As the older adult population increases, this population will need an increasing number of case managers.
 - The County's website should "sell" the services provided for this population better.
- Issues of siloes can often be related to funding. Is there a way to break down these barriers? Angie Boyter shared an account of a senior discussion group at North Laurel 50+ Center. There was a question as to whether a participant's daughter could sit in and participate in the group as the funding had been for a senior program.
- Andre Lingham suggested that the County begin to approach elder abuse the way we approach child abuse, with a multidisciplinary team. Elder abuse cases are becoming increasingly complex and combining, through co-location or other partnerships, the expertise of the Police Department, Office on Aging and Independence, Adult Protective Services, Mental Health Authority and other potential partners would help alleviate the fragmentation in services currently available.
 - Many times the Police Department interacts with older adults with dementia. Currently, there is very little in place to help these individuals. Too often, they are transported to Howard County General Hospital to insure they are safe. Debbie Fleischmann confirmed that these transports are confusing for the individuals and contribute to long ER waits.

Transportation

- The Commission asserted its belief that public-private partnerships may help alleviate transportation concerns within the County.
- Sharonlee Vogel suggested a pilot which would partner County government with Lyft and/or Uber and a cell phone manufacturer and service provider. Refurbished smart phones could be provided to older adults with the Lyft/Uber apps already installed, allowing seniors access to on-demand transportation.
 - This solution would be more cost effective than the current paratransit service offered by the county, \$56+ and increasing.
 - Debbie Fleischmann shared a story of a patient whose son was considering stopping his father's treatment at the hospital because having to transport his father to the appointments was threatening his own employment. A service like this which would provide on-demand transportation without significant wait times could be hugely beneficial.
- The Commission suggested that the County expand its current partnerships with cab companies.
- The Columbia Association runs a Senior Events Shuttle; would there be interest in expanding this program by the County? The COA has ties with CA and its Senior Advisory Committee which can facilitate this.
- Bob McLaughlin asked what transportation improvements have been made since County Executive Kittleman entered office. Mr. Kittleman shared that changes to RTA's fixed-routes are currently in progress, busy fixed-routes have added buses to reduce wait time between buses, significant fleet improvement has taken place. In addition, the County has launched a bikeshare program.

Legislative Breakfast

- Pete Brunner shared information on last year's Senate Bill 601, proposed by Senator Gail Bates. This bill would reduce the time requirement in the Aging in Place Tax Credit from 40 years to 25 and would make the credit transferrable between residences, essentially creating an Aging in the Community Tax Credit. The Commission will again be sharing their support of this bill at the Legislative Breakfast.

- Pete also shared the Commission's belief that legislation should be created to make the Homestead Tax Credit transferable between properties, as this allows freedom to downsize while remaining in the community.

Additional Questions/Comments/Feedback

- Jan Horan shared concerns that the Loan Closet isn't very accessible for seniors in Western Howard County. Is there a way to create a satellite location in the western part of the county? Would facilities be willing to deliver equipment?
- Sue Song shared a concern that there would be insufficient work force to serve the growing older adult population and suggested workforce development should be at the forefront.
- Jan Horan also felt that County employees need to be well versed in the work of all County departments so that they can provide appropriate referrals.
- Several commissioners shared concerns about the availability of affordable housing within the county.
- Pete Brunner shared that he felt the County needed to look for more grant opportunities.

New Business

Debbie Fleischmann motioned to cancel the August Commission on Aging Meeting. Michael Willis seconded the motion. *All in favor. Motion accepted.*

Adjournment

Reg Avery motioned to adjourn. Bob McLaughlin seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.

Recording Secretary: Jennie Rittenhouse

Next Meeting: September 25, 2017, Ellicott City 50+ Center, 7pm